
Summary Minutes: AWERB: PPL review meeting

Status: FINAL

Meeting held: Tuesday 30 September 2025 at 10am: MS Teams

Present:

MS Teams: 15, plus one in attendance, 4 by invitation and 8 apologies

1 WELCOME

A BSU Technician attended the meeting as an observer.

2 PROJECT LICENCE APPLICATION: SECONDARY AVAILABILITY AT THE RVC

The applicant presented a new project licence application to replace an expiring licence. The research focuses on auditory neuroscience, using ferrets as the model species due to their auditory range and trainability. Key technical advancements include the use of neuropixels electrodes for high-density neural recordings.

Main discussion points:

- **Water Regulation:** Seasonal weight changes were explained; wording in the licence will be reviewed to ensure it reflects negative reinforcement rather than positive conditioning.
- **Auditory Stimuli:** A query was raised about how ferrets respond to auditory stimuli at 90 decibels. It was confirmed that ferrets do not exhibit distress at this level of sound.
- **Sample Size:** Justification for four animals per experiment was provided, as this ensures sufficient data quality and replicability; this explanation will be added to the licence.
- **Rehoming:** Rare and only possible for animals without surgical interventions; wording will be added to the Animal Experience and NTS sections to clarify this.
- **Animal Numbers:** Figures allow for turnover and to avoid future amendments; actual use is likely to be lower than the maximum stated.
- **Implant Stability:** A query was raised about implants stability. It was confirmed that there have been four failures since 2011, so incidents are rare and animals appear unaffected if it happens. Monitoring, maintaining high standards, and early intervention are key.

Action Points

- Revise non-technical summary for clarity on animal outcomes and public perception.
- Expand justification for animal numbers to align with projected use.
- Clarify terminology around water regulation for accuracy and transparency.

The applicant was thanked for attending and asked to revise the licence in light of these comments.

3 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 18TH SEPTEMBER 2025

3.1 Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed to be an accurate record.

- 3.2 **Replacement Checklist:** It was agreed that the checklist will be discussed at the next meeting when standing agenda items are reviewed (scheduled for 5 November). [Secretary's note: After the meeting, it was agreed that this discussion will be rescheduled to ensure the member who raised the point can attend.]

4 HOME OFFICE: UNANNOUNCED HOME OFFICE INSPECTION: 26 SEPTEMBER 2025

Unannounced Home Office Inspection – Hawkshead Site

- An unannounced Home Office inspection took place at the Hawkshead site.
- Staff were commended for their exceptional handling of the visit, which occurred during a busy day with multiple surgeries and recoveries.
- The inspector toured all facilities, reviewed documentation, and noted high standards in cleanliness, organisation, paperwork accuracy, and enrichment programmes for sheep and dogs.
- A two- to three-hour interview covered topics including rehoming, training records, killing register, conflict of interest procedures, and infrastructure maintenance.
- The only finding was a minor note regarding cleaning a ceiling in a barn proposed for future bird use.
- The inspection was considered a strong endorsement of the RVC's culture of care and welfare practices.

5 NEW PROJECT LICENCE APPLICATION

The applicant presented a new licence for research into gene therapy for ciliopathies, using mouse models to test gene and cell therapy constructs delivered via AAV vectors. The licence consolidates previous licences and includes protocols for breeding, ocular and intracerebroventricular dosing.

Main Discussion Points

- Licence Consolidation: References to future consolidation will be removed as this has already occurred.
- Animal Numbers: High numbers were explained due to breeding requirements and variability in data. The applicant would expand the 3Rs section to highlight refinements and justify numbers.
- Dosing Tables: Fixed volumes will be revised to reflect mL/kg guidelines; similar adjustments for IM dosing.
- Maze Test & Eye Injection Protocols: Clarifications required on rest periods, dosing frequency, and severity classifications; applicant would review this section for consistency.
- Adverse Effects: Blindness and obesity to be acknowledged as harms and licence wording to be updated.
- Phenotypes & Wording: Clarifications needed on iPSC-derived cells, immune response, and gene selection; applicant to include safeguards for novel genes.
- Drug Delivery Routes: intrathecal administration and other invasive routes not in use would be removed.
- Weight Loss Criteria: Review thresholds and timelines for humane endpoints post-surgery.

Action Points

- Revise dosing tables and protocol inconsistencies.
- Clarify maze test recovery periods and eye injection severity categories.
- Update adverse effects section and gene selection safeguards.

- Remove unused administration routes and unrealistic procedures.
- Review weight loss criteria and euthanasia thresholds.

Post-Applicant Discussion

- AWERB agreed the licence requires significant revision before submission.
- A follow-up meeting will be arranged with the applicant and senior staff to address communication issues and explore solutions.
- Concerns about scientific justification and monitoring plans were noted and will be communicated to the applicant.
- The revised licence will be returned to AWERB for full review.

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DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS:

- 13 October: PPL Review: 10 AM.
- 5 November: Standing agenda items: 2pm to 4.30pm

AWERB Secretary
December 2025